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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0868
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000204

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [USAU](#) [LY](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: OULD DADDAH AND THE FNDD: UNITED AGAINST QADHAFI,
COMMON CAUSE (FOR NOW) AGAINST MILITARY, DIVIDED (AS
ALWAYS) ON ABDALLAHI

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 155

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In the wake of Qadhafi's "mediation," Ahmed Ould Daddah and President Abdallahi's FNDD have again been pushed towards cooperation in denouncing Qadhafi and renouncing the military strategy for June 6 elections. Ould Daddah remains fixed in opposition to President Abdallahi's return but in incrementally more open to a return long enough to set the stage for a viable transition. Ould Daddah feels Aziz is stupidly leading Mauritania towards a relation with Iran that Aziz will be unable to manage. He also fears drug interests will play upon Aziz' desperation for financial support. End Summary

¶2. (C) Charge met March 15 with opposition leader and RFD party president Ahmed Ould Daddah. Ould Daddah provided Charge with a copy of the joint RFD / FNDD declaration of March 14 that had denounced Qadhafi's support for the military's unilateral election strategy and called for the international community to again take charge of the political dossier without Qadhafi as its spokesman. Ould Daddah noted he had been impressed with Qadhafi's knowledge of the Mauritanian personalities and state-of-play when he went to Tripoli but found Qadhafi had little interest in re-establishing democracy. Qadhafi stroked Ould Daddah's ego somewhat by telling him, "We know you really won the elections, but Aziz would have launched the coup then-and-there had you been declared the winner." Ould Daddah lamented that Qadhafi had missed a chance to act the statesman by bargaining away his political support for the short-term benefit of seeing Israel expelled.

¶3. (C) Ould Daddah told Charge he will be working in closer collaboration with the FNDD in opposing the military's agenda. He is in the process of writing parallel letters to President Abdallahi's to the international community leadership seeking a restatement of international condemnation of the coup over Qadhafi's statements. Ould Daddah said he would have been open to joint RFD/FNDD letters but did not think those could clear his own internal party clearance procedures in time. Ould Daddah stressed the importance of the international community -- notably the AU, EU, France and the U.S. to restate their opposition to the coup and to renounce the regime's June 6 election plan.

14. (C) Charge noted his understanding that the FNDD had offered to resolve Ould Daddah's strong opposition to President Abdallahi's return by offering a largely symbolic return wherein Abdallahi would yield his executive power to a strong new Prime Minister who would head a government of national unity including RFD members. Ould Daddah initially retorted with a "I will never accept Abdallahi's return" insisting that "Abdallahi is largely responsible for the coup" in the first place for having accepted military support in the campaign and allowing the military to manipulate his presidency. Charge noted that, by making Abdallahi's return the main issue, Ould Daddah allows the question of the military's political departure to take second place -- effectively dividing the opposition. Ould Daddah then relented somewhat (has he did previously in REFTEL) by allowing he would accept Abdallahi back symbolically if that was an effective measure to pressure the military -- but insisting that the return lead immediately into a resignation in favor of the President Senate. Charge pushed some more asking if Ould Daddah really wanted the President of the Senate (a man who has been politically gutted by regime intimidation) to be responsible for a transition leading to elections?. If so, with what government -- the current regime government or the last Abdallahi government? When pushed on the practicalities of his position, Ould Daddah clarified that he could see Abdallahi coming back long enough to establish a strong government of national unity with reinforced executive authority and then resigning. As such, the weak President of the Senate could take interim power but, consistent with the constitution, would be unable to

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alter the last appointed government.

15. (C) While welcoming Israel's departure because of his views concerning the Palestinian process, Ould Daddah worried that Aziz had kicked the Israeli Ambassador for less principled reasons -- to gain Qadhafi's support in the mediation and to win Iranian financial backing. Terming Aziz as one of the least intelligent military leaders, Ould Daddah said Aziz was playing a dangerous game thinking he can manage those two relationships -- "Qadhafi and the Iranians are a lot smarter than Aziz and will eventually pull us into a jamahiriya with Libya and a Shi'ah outpost for Iran." Ould Daddah said Aziz "will sell anything to stay in power" and worried that "the same drug traffickers who knocked off the government in Guinea Bissau will find a willing partner here."

16. (C) Comment: Ould Daddah and the RFD are again working together, but Ould Daddah's personal animosity against Abdallahi make the coalition tenuous at best. Ould Daddah is aware that a transition government authored by President Abdallahi (versus the military's plan) offers a far greater chance of free and fair elections Ould Daddah can win but he still hopes for a "ni - ni" option that allows him to dispense with both Abdallahi and Aziz. Key FNDD leaders like Messaoud Ould Boulkheir could probably agree with Ould Daddah with an arrangement including Abdallahi's resignation once a credible transition government is in place but the FNDD is unlikely to put it in writing until Ould Daddah accepts Abdallahi's return, albeit temporarily.

HANKINS